JAPAN'S PLATONIC WAR WITH GERMANY IS SUBJECT OF APPRECIATIVE ARTICLE BY AMERICAN WRITER

Eliza R. Scidmore Pays Tribute to High Plan of Conduct of Nipponese Operations

[NOTE—Few articles on Japan's part in the great world-war have attracted anything like the attention given to that of Miss Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore in a recent issue of the Outlook. Several weeks ago the Star-Bulletin referred editorially to this article. A large part of it is published herewith. Miss Scidmore has lived in Japan for many years and is acknowledged to be an unusually accurate observer as well as an interesting writer. She recently passed through Honolulu on her way to the states.]

Japan joined very slowly and deliberately, evidently reluctantly, in the great war last summer; responded, as bound by her alliance to do whenever requested, and this time "to protect British commerce in the eastern seas." So quietly and so slowly did the wheels of government move towards that end that many hoped until the very last moment that Japan would not be embroiled at all. It meant a setback to all political plans and the breaking of the promise to reduce taxation by which Count Okuma's party had come to power, in opposition to the military clique which had ruled so long unhindered and continually demanded more million for more armament. The 16,000,000 yen surplus in the treasury, which gave opportunity to reduce the business tax under which the mercantile classes were groaning, vanished into the 60,000,000 yen appropriated for the Shantung expedition, and the merchants stoically accepted the situation.

Throughout the whole affair Japan has been calm, quiet, self-contained—a splendid object-lesson of how to go to war and not lose your head. There was no boasting, no hurrahing, no noisy "On to Tsingtau!" The troops moved unseen, the expedition embarking from southern ports, and northern troops moving down by night trains to replace the departed garrisons in Kiushiu Castle towns. All the rules of war on land and sea, all The Hague conventions and all the etiquette of slaughter on land, in the air, on and under the sea, have been scrupulously observed—a war with velvet gloves—"our platonic war" with Germany, as T. Miyaoka has so cleverly described it.

Disregarding the Austrian example in ultimatums, Japan allowed Germany a week to return an answer to her advice, and a month for disarmament and withdrawal should Germany accept the advice. Upon receipt of the ultimatum in Berlin every Japanese in Germany was clapped into prison, the German government explaining that it could not otherwise protect them. Japanese embassy officials could not see or communicate with them, nor get the list of their names. One hundred and seventy-eight Japanese professors and students, valets, acrobats, shopkeepers, and even children, were so detained, with no definite charge against any one of them. Next the German government seized £250,000 of Japanese government money deposited in the Deutsche bank in Berlin, and grim war was on without any answer being returned to the ultimatum.

Neither the ultimatum nor the declaration of war made any difference whatever in the condition of the German residents in Japan. No disturbance or demonstration was made, no change occurred in their relations or conditions. German reservists continued to leave for America and Tsingtau—even by Japanese vessels—and no one was arrested or molested.

Simultaneously with the declaration of war the minister of home affairs, alarmed by the savage ways of war in Christian Europe, issued instructions concerning the protection of German subjects in Japan, securing them the same protection of person, property and honor as before if they conducted themselves without prejudice to the interests of Japan and her allies. The minister of education warned teachers not to make imprudent remarks that might rouse the animosity of young students, and urged them to show every kindness and facility to German teachers and students who might be called to the colors. The chief of police in Tokio reminded people that, although the two governments "had entered into hostilities for good reasons," the people of the two countries as individuals should not act against each other in any way, and that the citizens of Tokio should be more magnanimous than ever to those Germans who chose to remain; that they should not hold public meetings to inspire animosity, but always to be worthy members of a civilized country. Wherefore German residents went about their affairs as freely as American or Spanish residents. Of 24 German teachers in government employ only three left to join the colors at Tsingtau, over 50 German teachers remained in private employ, and no students or classes showed disrepect or turbulence. German mining engineers continued their duties at distant mountain villages among thousands of laborers, and even the German editor of a subsidized newspaper continued his criticisms of everything Japanese, his philippics against England, and Hobson prophecies of war between Japan and America. After one warning by the police his journal was suppressed and he was ordered to leave. Angered Britons, when they had cooled, realized that it would have been better to imprison him "for protection," as he speedily went to Peking and assumed charge of an anti-Japanese newspaper, and began to make things hum in that distracted, politics-ridden capital.

Contrary to European example, German government money deposited in Japan was not touched, and the Deutsche bank in Yokohama continues unhindered in its management. No German property was injured, no German molested. No one's German governess, valet, or employe of any kind was interfered with or imprisoned. Germans naively wrote their names in the lists for tennis tournaments, unconscious of the fact that not a British woman or child would tread the same court with them.

While this went on in Japan noncombatant Japanese were still detained in German prisons and the vigorous representations of the American ambassador in Berlin were unavailing. In October the German authorities, through the American government, intimated that the Japanese prisoners would be released provided the Japanese government gave a similar guarantee for the safety of German residents in Japan. If that were guaranteed, the German government would "not only release the Japanese, but even afford them all facilities for departure." On October 27, through the still more strenuous efforts of Ambassador Gerard, 71 Japanese were delivered to him and sent under embassy escort to Zurich, Switzerland; but 38 Japanese remained in German jails, some of them the children of Japanese residents in Germany.

The Germans, one and all, bitterly resented Japan's coming into the war game. They could not accept the same logic and plea of loyalty to an ally by which they explained Germany's stand by her ally, Austria. They recounted unceasingly all that Japan owed to Germany in military and medical training, modern science, and art and philosophy. Japan even owes the life of Japan's emperor to Germany, they said, since as a delicate child he was cared for by a German physician. They proved so convincingly that everything was due to contact with German culture that for once Commodore Perry had a rest, and no American made himself heard with that perennial, age-worn claim of the American after-dinner speaker in Japan: "We did it all"—i. e., started Japan in the path of modern science and progress. Are "We" and "Commodore Perry" always to be crammed down the Japanese throat at the Japanese banquet board by the touring American?

The German officials left, protesting the ingratitude of the world and Japan. "Why, this war was not to come off until next spring," whimpered one German official's incautious wife; "and then we were all to have been safely home in Germany before it began." A most illuminating break, which the British circulated with gusto.

There was no war thirst in Japan, no lingering animosity or resentment at the advice of 1895 that had robbed them of Port Arthur, no race hatred or cry of "white peril" when war was declared. Intellectual Japan grieved deeply at the necessity; every army surgeon and university professor was saddened at being arrayed against honored teachers, and was cut to the quick by the violent expressions of German professors and officials. "Japan biting at Europe's heel," and "robbing" and "stealing Tsingtau," often raised peals of merriment.

The real bombardment of the inner forts of Tsingtau began on October 31, the emperor's official birthday, "as prearranged," they might have said; for a party of high officials, foreign military attaches, and members of parliament had been waiting for a fortnight in Tokio ready to embark on a despatch boat to Tsingatu "to watch operations in Shantung."

The first lot of prisoners, 77 in all, and all captured on outpost duty, were brought to Japan early in October, and assigned to Kurume, on the southern island, the headquarters of the 18th Army Division. They were received at the station with ceremony by the military officers of the garrisons, by Mrs. Kamio and the members of the local Red Cross Society. I visited them myself later. The men were quartered in a Buddhist preaching-hall and class rooms, the officers in the Lord Abbot's rooms at the Bairingi temple, and the wounded men in a separate ward of the military hospital, where the chief surgeon and all his attendants spoke German. Officers, men, and invalids were allowed to speak to me freely, and one and all acknowledged the courtesy, consideration, and unfailing kindness of the Japanese officers in charge. As with the Russian prisoners of war in 1904 and 1905, the Japanese are doing "as The Hague ordains," and then doing even a little more for their charges.

The captives are kept at different old castle towns, now headquarters of military divisions in the southern islands, in order to gain the advantage of mild winter weather. Buddhist temples and preaching-halls have been rented for such use, and are readily adapted to the purpose. The prisoners live under the most lenient regulations, and the prisoners' information bureau in Tokio permits communication, takes charge of any consignments, and answers any letters of inquiry concerning the captives. The prisoners' families may join them, rent houses in the towns, and the prisoners may live there with them under light restrictions, as Russian prisoners were permitted to do in 1904 and 1905.

Since the war began Japan has been courted by all the powers in Europe and directly and indirectly appealed to for help. In season and out, M. Pichon, former minister of foreign affairs, has argued in print for a Japanese contingent in Europe; he remembers and always acknowledges generously that he, while French minister at Peking, owed his life, as did all the other foreigners, to the stiff defense of the Su Wang Fy by Col. Shiba and his Japanese guards and volunteers. Besides troops—a whole army corps, it is said, the Russians have called for to strike the sure terror to the heart of the enemy which they themselves experienced when Nogi's men from Fort Arthur fell upon the Russian right at Mukden—besides a fighting contingent, there has been a call for a body of 100,000 Japanese coolies to intrench, that feature of the division of military labor having impressed all foreign observers of the war in Manchuria.

It is comforting to any people to be appreciated, to have their merits and abilities acknowledged, to be the honored ally of Great Britain, and to work with her in military and naval undertakings; but Japan has not at all lost her head with all the successes, courting, and coaxing and flattery that have gone on. She knows she is a great power, with a great navy, and an army second to none in merciless efficiency and first in humanity and chivalry, and her people have no notion of mixing in the European mess, of marching to the shambles of Europe, of dying for any other emperor than their own. Despite Congressman Hobson's warnings and prophecies and the machinations of the Peking press and diplomatic wire-pullers and of the American masquerader in Tokio, she does not want to and is not "going to war" with America. It would not pay, and Japan is a very hard-headed, practical Japan since the last war left her the great legacy of taxes. Japan is not striving to gain "the supremacy of the Pacific"—if that means 90 per cent of the commerce and carrying trade—because she already has it, and has had it without realizing that it was anything to make a great fuss about. Four merchant ships under the American flag are a pitiful plea for "supremacy;" and more than this, our strangling navigation laws, the tyranny of labor unions, the solidarity of the labor vote will forever check the United States from getting any more of the supremacy. As good neighbors and mutual customers, the one needing silk and tea as much as the other needs raw cotton and machinery and wheat, there is room and chance for both without jealousy and crowding and blocking.

If ever there was the retort courteous, just retribution, and also an object-lesson that no country can ignore, the Japanese have afforded it in this little war at Tsingtau, a campaign that they entered upon with deliberation and dignity, with every courtesy and honor to the enemy, without bosats or threats, gibes or jeers at their opponents, and without any interference whatever with non-combatants. The whole campaign was conducted according to the rules of war and of chivalry. "Noblesse oblige" is easily translated into "the way of the Samurai," and bushido, in working even in the field, should by contrast give acute heart-searchings and violent blushes to some in Europe.

It was necessary to destroy the Germans' stronghold on the Asiatic mainland and their coaling and wireless stations throughout the south seas in order to protect commerce and trade and industry. Japan must have wool from Australia and cotton from America and iron from China to keep her factories running, and silk and tea and small wares must go to America if Japan's people are to live and pay taxes. Her commerce must be protected at all cost, and, thanks to her navy, Japanese steamships have crossed the Pacific back and forth unhindered, keeping to their fixed schedules just as they did last year.

Japan has said that she will ultimately return Tsingtau to China, administering it until the peace conference permits her to negotiate with China. A peaceful and prosperous Shantung, growing beans and silk to ship by the Japanese railway and Japanese ships from the free port of Tsingtau, will pay her best in the long run, and Japan would gain nothing by holding on to Tsingtau. All Europe grinned and scoffed when we said we would return Cuba after the Spanish war, but we did retire, and occupied and retired from it even a second time. If the meddlers in Peking will only cease to stir strife, China can date a great prosperity from the return of Tsingtau to its owner, never again to be alienated to any European power. In the last months the Germans wrecked all the public buildings, the docks and wharves, and shell fire destroyed the great barracks and forts, the water-works, and the electric light works. The young forests were cut away on the land side to give the guns sweep, the 40 miles of perfect automobile roads were neglected, and 40,000,000 marks of German taxpayers' tribute have gone for naught. German trade and commerce are paralyzed, perhaps never to recover, and German merchants, once on the pinnacle of prosperity, are ruined throughout the Far East.

Losses by fire in Canada and the United States during 1914 aggregated $235,591,350, nearly $11,000,000 more than during 1913.